



25-01-2017

**Dear Mayor Kasumovic,**

We are writing you on behalf of Stichting Dierenopvang Bosnië (Stray Dogs Bosnia), a Dutch organization which is active since 2002 in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the field of animal saving, protection, rescue, adoption and projects of sterilization. We actively help the shelter in Canton 2 Orasje for 10 years now, and we have helped many towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with local non-governmental associations and local communities run sterilization campaigns for abandoned street animals dogs and cats. This is being recognized as the most important preventing measure against rise in population.

Since 2009 Zenica was one of towns where we were particularly proud to say that thanks to dedication and hard work of local Association for Saving and Protecting Animals SAPA Zenica and good partnership with local City Administration at the time, we had example of best practices when it comes to conducting sterilization and castration programs for street animals as well as animals in ownership for many years. At the time this to be taken off black listed towns where major killings of street dogs had taken place for decades and hence new good practices were installed pursuant to the Animal Protection and Welfare legislation passed at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are concerned to learn from media and social networks about your announcements that with the informal opening of the City Shelter, within 15-20 days all streets dogs will be removal-eliminated from the streets, the estimate being mentioned of ca 2.000 dogs,. It is known that in the current situation, the capacity of Zenica City Shelter is at best 80 to 100 dogs. With no action taken to expand capacities as of yet, hence your announcement raises a lot of alarms and questions. Let alone open room for different abuses and manipulations by those involved in the Shelter Project.

We believe, having gained experience from practices elsewhere, that not only that it is impossible to place 2.000 dogs in a shelter, but it is highly uncommendable for several factors

1. Bosnian Law is clear; there is no euthanasia allowed of dogs in shelters due to expiry of any kind of deadline.
2. Accumulation of dogs in a shelter raises costs and other capacity problems.
3. There are absolutely no arguments for removing a stable and healthy sterilized population of dogs from the street.

We can assure you: All these measurements will not lead to problem solving you are looking for. On the contrary! New dogs will soon come to the City, as the core of the problem - abandonment of dogs by owners, had not been addressed.

What also concern us is the fact that you still have not opened the door of your Shelter to the public, volunteers and members of non-governmental organization, and at the same time we learn that already around 50 dogs had been caught and placed in the Shelter. Especially these groups and people can help you run the shelter, rehome animals, volunteer. We strongly urge you to ensure full transparency and accountability as well as full open door policy as prescribed by the Law and all relevant by-laws at earliest convenience. You are bound to do this by the Law and by-laws.

We also urge you to re-think your strategy, as example of bad practices and bad overcrowded shelters are all around us. Instead keep the shelter small, transparent, in transition. Keep a healthy and stable, sterilized population of dogs on the street to prevent more population expansion. Please do allow local NGO SAPA Zenica to help you with rehoming, sterilization- and castration projects and ensure highest possible level of transparency. Only then will you be able to call upon European practices and European standards to which you so often refer to in your public speeches.

Many organizations active in the EU will be monitoring the situation in Zenica and will act upon these changes of policy. We urge you not to engage in dubious actions and not to annul the results of years of good practices in stabilizing the population, by reverting to the "old" practices and installing retrograde tendencies. We employ you to address the core of the problem and prevent irresponsible owners from abandoning dogs, ensuring implementation of sanctions, running public campaigns and educations programs. For those you will have our full support.

We are worried that all the successful efforts a lot of highly engaged people have made in the past years will be lost. It would have been a waste of time, energy and money. And worse yet: the results you envision with your measurements will not be met.

Please do let us know your vision and ideas on this matter: we are happy to be of any advice.

Sincerely yours,

Suze Steenbergen

  
Boardmember, Stichting Dierenopvang Bosnië (Stray dogs Bosnia)